

protecting
and promoting
authors' rights



Press Release

3 August 2011

Government Response to the Hargreaves Report into Intellectual Property & Growth

The Authors' Licensing & Collecting Society (ALCS) welcomes the Government's response to the Hargreaves Report particularly the continued acknowledgement of the vital role played by the UK Intellectual Property (IP) framework in supporting the economy.

Representing over 82,000 writers, most of whom the Government quantify as SMEs, (a sector whose earning potential is seen as key to increasing UK GDP) ALCS is heartened to note that the Government 'absolutely endorses the Review's view that we must not put our hugely important creative industries at risk by what we do'.

We support the overarching ambition of the review to ensure that the UK copyright system promotes 'fair and effective' means for grasping the opportunities digital technology presents. We welcome the opportunity of working with Government and other industry partners to develop licensing mechanisms and solutions to build more efficient, enhanced access models for writers' works. We also look forward to further collaboration on the development of codes of practice governing licensing operations.

However, we are concerned that the stated aim of developing 'the widest possible exceptions to copyright within the existing EU framework' may have the unintended consequence of upsetting balances within the current system. UK licensing schemes provide access to huge content reserves for educational use on terms that reward writers, thereby providing incentive for further creation. These schemes rely on the frameworks established under UK copyright exceptions. Furthermore, in an era of rapid technological change where new commercial services are constantly evolving for copying, storing and accessing works, it is inflexible for the UK to declare that, unlike most European countries, it will not consider models for fair compensation for private use.

In its response to the Hargreaves Review ALCS highlighted a number of highly successful writers for whom the remuneration from licensing sources such as these had been a key part of sustaining their creative and economic contribution. Any widening of exceptions must consider, with great care, the downstream effects on the continued creation of high quality content.

The response refers to ‘copyright infringement as a stubborn fact of the digital landscape which might well get worse and which justifies serious government effort in identifying the right mix of measures to address it’. This approach has been urgently needed for some time and we look forward to working with the Government and industry partners to find proportionate and effective solutions. We wholeheartedly support the notion of copyright education programmes being an intrinsic part of the landscape going forwards.

ALCS Chief Executive, Owen Atkinson, noted: *“It is excellent news that the government is trying to address issues around copyright bearing in mind the changing technology which facilitates easy abuse of the system. However, we are concerned at the tone of the proposals around extended copyright exceptions as we believe authors have the right to receive fair remuneration for the use of their work, online or otherwise”.*

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Notes for editors

ALCS

ALCS collects fees on behalf of the whole spectrum of UK writers: novelists, film & TV script writers, Poets and playwrights, freelance journalists, translators and adaptors. All writers are eligible to join ALCS.

Set up in 1977 in the wake of the original campaign for Public Lending Right (led by ALCS Honorary President – Maureen Duffy, Brigid Brophy and Lord Ted Willis among others) the Society collects fees that are difficult, time-consuming or legally impossible for writers and their representatives to claim on an individual basis: money that is nonetheless due to them. Fees collected are distributed to writers twice a year in February and August. ALCS currently has over 82,000 Members in the UK and worldwide. It has agreements with over 55 countries worldwide and has paid out over £275 million in its 34 year history.

Further details on ALCS can be found at www.alcs.co.uk

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